QuickStudy HISTORY

Weather Disasters & Epidemics

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1900	Massive hurricane hits Galveston, Texas, leaving the city submerged and killing 10,000 people.
1900	Bubonic plague hits San Francisco, California, causing five deaths and lasting for five years.
1902	Mount Pelée erupts on the Caribbean island of Martinique, destroying the capital city of St. Pierre. Up to 40,000 are killed.
1902	Tornado in Goliad, Texas kills 114.
1903	Fire breaks out at the Iroquois Theater in Chicago, causing the deaths of over 600 people.
1904	More than 1,000 people (mostly children) are killed after the overloaded steamboat, The General Slocum, catches fire and crashes in New York.
1906	On April 18 a massive earthquake (7.9 on the Richter scale) hits San Francisco, killing about 3,000 people.
1906	Typhoon with tsunami kills 10,000 people after hitting Hong Kong.
1907	Coal mine explosion in Monongah, West Virginia kills more than 360 people.
1910	Sickle-cell anemia is first described as a genetic blood disease, generally found in African Americans.
1911	Fire breaks out at New York's Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, resulting in the death of about 146 people. This tragedy leads to protective labor laws.
1913	Floods spread across the East Coast, Midwest and South, killing approximately 460 people.
1915	Earthquake in Avezzano, Italy leaves 29,980 dead.
1916	Nationwide, over 7,000 deaths occur as a result of polio (27,363 cases are reported).
1918	Spanish influenza hits, killing more than 500,000 people—the most devastating single epidemic in the United States.
1918	More than 1,000 people are killed when forest fires rage through Minnesota and Wisconsin.
1920	China is the site for the world's third-deadliest quake of the 20th century. An estimated 200,000 die when a magnitude 8.6 temblor hits Gansu, triggering massive landslides.
1921	A Soviet famine in 1921 begins with a drought that causes massive crop failures. The initial death toll is greatly magnified when Lenin refuses to acknowledge the famine and sends no aid. The Soviets later estimate that 5.1 million died.
1925	Tri-state tornado kills more than 695 people and injures 2,000.
1931	Massive flooding of China's Yangtze River leads to more than three million deaths from drowning, disease and starvation.
1934-1940	Severe drought hits the Great Plains, triggering massive migration affecting Wyoming, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico and Missouri. The affected area becomes known as the Dust Bowl.
1937	One of the largest airships ever built, the Hindenburg, explodes just before landing in New Jersey.
1940	The Tacoma Narrows Bridge collapses due to a wind-induced vibrations.
1942	Cyclone in Bengal, India kills 40,000.
1942	Approximately 492 people are killed when the Coconut Grove nightclub in Boston, Massachusetts catches fire.
1946	A 40-foot tsunami in Hawaii kills more than 170 people.
1947	A fire and subsequent explosion on the French freighter Grandcamp destroys most of Texas City, Texas and kills 516.
1949	2,720 deaths occurr from polio, and 42,173 cases are reported nationwide.
1952	High-pressure system settles over London, trapping pollution near the ground. Some 4,000 people die in "Great Smog," mostly from respiratory and cardiac distress.
1952	Polio kills 3,300; 57,628 cases are reported.
1953	Severe storm with winds up to 150 mph hits Holland, causing floods and a total of 1,835 deaths.
1957	Hurricane Audrey kills more than 500 people in Louisiana and Texas.
1960	Approximately 15,000 die as earthquake sets off tidal wave and fire, destroying most of Agadir, Morocco.
1963	Cyclone kills about 22,000 people when it hits East Pakistan.
1969	Hurricane Camille spreads across seven states, from Louisiana to Virginia, killing over 250 people.
1970	7.8 earthquake triggers a rock and snow avalanche at Mount Huascaran, Peru that buries two towns and kills 20,000 people.
1971	An estimated 100,000 die when heavy rains lead to severe flooding around Hanoi in what was then North Vietnam.
1972	Hurricane Agnes causes widespread flash floods extending from northwest Florida to New York. Damages are estimated at $8.6 billion. It is still the most devastating natural disaster to ever hit Pennsylvania.
1974	"Super Tornado Outbreak": Series of 148 tornadoes strike 13 states; 330 die and 5,484 are injured in a damage path covering more than 2,500 miles—worst tornado outbreak in U.S. history.
1977	Buffalo, New York blizzard kills 29 people.
1978	The Great Blizzard of 1978 only lasted two days; however, the blizzard accounted for about a third of the month's total snowfall in Ohio—63 inches.
1979	Thousands of gallons of radioactive steam are released into the air after a partial meltdown of nuclear fuel at the Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania.

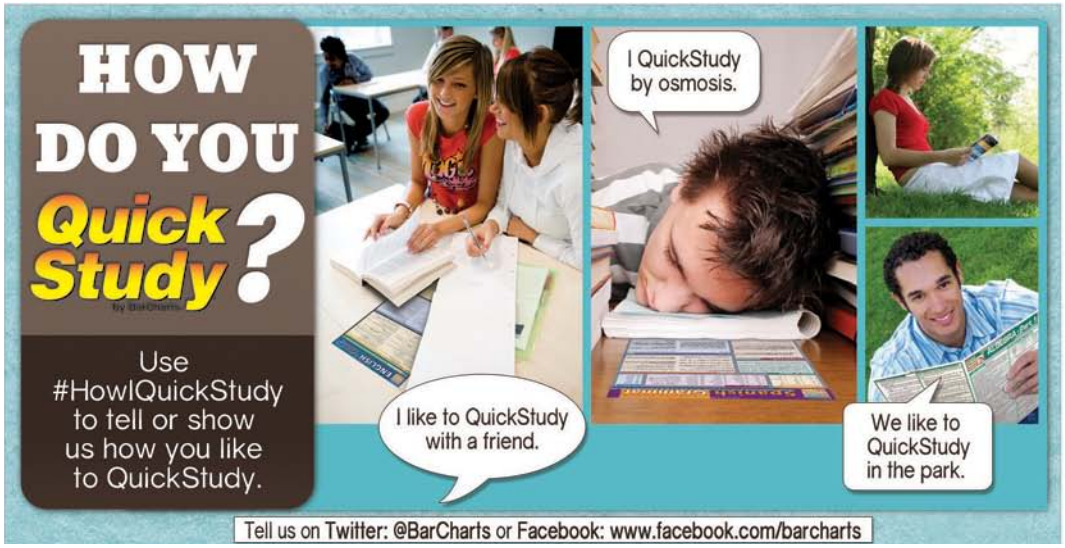
1980	Severe drought in central and eastern U.S.; estimated $20.0 (48.4*) billion damage/costs to agriculture and related industries; estimated 10,000 deaths (includes heat stress-related).
1980	Mount St. Helens erupts in the state of Washington.
1980	During a blinding spring squall, the freighter *Summit Venture* rams into the Sunshine Skyway and knocks out a 1,200-foot length of the bridge across the mouth of Tampa Bay. 35 people die.
1981	First cases of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) are reported in the United States, with a total estimate at 929,985. Total deaths from AIDS is estimated at 524,060.
1982	Storms and flooding related to El Niño, especially in the states of Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida; approximately $1.1 (2.2) billion in damage/costs; at least 50 deaths.
1983	Severe freeze in central/northern Florida causes about $2-4 billion damage to citrus industry; no deaths.
1983	Hurricane Alicia (category 3 hurricane)—Texas; $3.0 (5.9*) billion damage/costs; 21 deaths.
1985	Hurricane Juan (category 1 hurricane)—Louisiana and Southeast U.S.—severe flooding; $1.5 (3.0*) billion damage/costs; 63 deaths.
1985	Hurricane Elena (category 3 hurricane)—Florida to Louisiana; $1.3 (2.8*) billion damage/costs; four deaths.
1985	Severe freeze central/northern Florida; about $1.2 (2.7*) billion damage to citrus industry; no deaths.
1986	The space shuttle *Challenger* explodes 73 seconds after liftoff, killing all seven crew members: Francis R. Scobee, Michael J. Smith, Judith A. Resnik, Ronald E. McNair, Ellison S. Onizuka, Gregory B. Jarvis, and schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe. A booster leak ignites the fuel, causing the explosion.
1986	Severe summer drought in parts of the southeastern U.S., with severe losses to agriculture; $1.0-$1.5 (1.8-2.6) billion in damage/costs; estimated 100 deaths.
1988	Drought in central and eastern U.S., with very severe losses to agriculture and related industries; estimated $40.0 (79.8*) billion damage/costs; estimated 5,000 to 10,000 deaths (includes heat stress-related).
1989	Hurricane Hugo, category 4 hurricane, devastates South and North Carolina with 20-foot storm surge and severe wind damage after hitting Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It causes over $9.0 (13.9*) billion damage/costs (about $7.1 billion in Carolinas); 86 deaths (57 – U.S. mainland, 29 – U.S. Islands).
1989	The Loma Prieta earthquake in San Francisco causes 62 deaths.
1989	Tanker *Exxon Valdez* hits a reef and releases 10 million-plus gallons of oil into the waters off Alaska.
1989	Severe summer drought over much of the northern plains, with significant losses to agriculture; at least $1.0 (1.5*) billion in damage/costs; no deaths are reported.
1990	Kilauea Volcano erupts in Hawaii, destroying more than 180 homes, highways, and treasured historical and archaeological sites.
1990	Torrential rains cause flooding along the Trinity, Red, and Arkansas Rivers in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arizona; over $1.0 (1.4*) billion damage/costs;13 deaths.
1991	Cyclones trigger flooding in Bangladesh that kills 138,000.
1991	Oakland firestorms due to low humidity and high winds cause approximately $3.5 (3.9*) billion damage/costs and 25 deaths.
1992	Hurricane Andrew, category 5 hurricane, hits Florida, leaving thousands homeless and causing $25 (30.1*) billion in damages and 65 deaths.
1992	Hurricane Iniki, category 4, hits Hawaiian island of Kauai; about $1.8 (2.4) billion damage/costs; seven deaths.
1992	Nor'easter of '92, slow-moving storm, batters northeast U.S. coast; New England hardest hit; $1.0-$2.0 (1.6 -2.4*) billion damage/costs; 19 deaths.
1993	Dry weather, high winds, and wildfires in southern California; approximately $1.0 (1.4*) billion damage/costs; four deaths.
1993	Southeastern U.S.: About $1.0 (1.3*) billion damage/costs to agriculture; at least 16 deaths.
1993	Severe, widespread flooding in central U.S. due to persistent heavy rains and thunderstorms; approximately $21 (21.6*) billion in damages/ costs; 48 deaths.
1993	"The Storm of the Century" hits entire eastern seaboard with tornadoes, high winds, and heavy snows (2-4 feet); $5.0-$6.0 (5.5 - 6.5*) billion damage/costs; approximately 270 deaths.
1994	Intense ice storm with extensive damage in portions of TX, OK, AR, LA, MS, AL, TN, GA, SC, NC, and VA; approximately $3.0 (3.4*) billion damage/costs; nine deaths.
1994	Severe fire season in western states due to dry weather; approximately $1.0 (1.4*) billion damage/costs; death toll undetermined.
1994	Tropical Storm Alberto brings torrential rains (10-25 inches in three days), widespread flooding, and agricultural damage in parts of Georgia, Alabama, and panhandle of Florida; approximately $1.0 (1.2*) billion damage/costs; 32 deaths.
1994	Midwest flooding-severe, widespread flooding in central U.S. due to persistent heavy rains and thunderstorms; approximately $21.0 (26.7*) billion damage/costs; 48 deaths.
1994	Torrential rain (10-25 inches in five days) and thunderstorms cause flooding across much of southeast Texas; approximately $1.0 (1.2*) billion damage/costs; 19 deaths.
1994	Hurricane Gordon leads to an estimated 1,122 deaths in Haiti.
1994	Earthquake measuring 6.8 in magnitude kills 58 and injures over 8,000 in San Fernando Valley, California. Damage is estimated at $10 (10.6*) billion.
1995	Storm surge during Hurricane Opal causes extensive damage to the Florida panhandle estimated at over $3 (3.4*) billion.

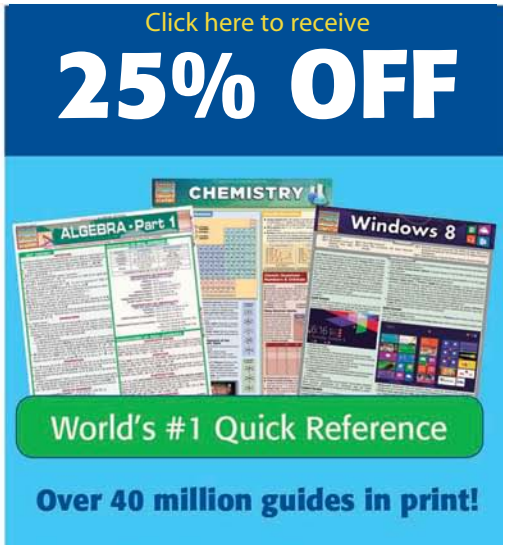
* = amount in 2007 U.S. dollars

1995	Hurricane Marilyn, category 2 hurricane, devastates U.S. Virgin Islands; estimated $2.1 (2.3*) billion damage/costs; 13 deaths.
1995	Frequent winter storms cause 20-70 inches rainfall and periodic flooding across much of California; over $3.0 (3.3*) billion damage/costs; 27 deaths.
1995	Record heat wave in Chicago leaves 739 dead.
1996	Very heavy snowstorm (1-4 feet) over Appalachians, Mid-Atlantic, and Northeast, followed by severe flooding in parts of same area due to rain and snowmelt, cause approximately $3.0 (3.3*) billion damage/costs and 187 deaths.
1996	Hurricane Fran slams into North Carolina's southern coast, with damages estimated at $3.2 (3.5*) billion.
1996	Severe drought in agricultural regions of southern plains—Texas and Oklahoma are most severely affected; approximately $5.0 (5.2*) billion damage/costs; no deaths.
1996	Very heavy, persistent rains (10-30 inches) and melting snow over Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and western Montana; approximately $1.0 (1.2*) billion damage/costs; nine deaths.
1997	Torrential rains (10-40 inches in two weeks) and snowmelt produce severe flooding over portions of California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, and Montana; approximately $3.0 (3.2*) billion damage/costs; 36 deaths.
1997	Severe flooding in Dakotas and Minnesota due to heavy spring snowmelt; approximately $3.7 (3.9*) billion damage/costs; 11 deaths.
1997	Tornadoes and severe flooding hit the states of Arizona, Montana, Mississippi, Tennesee, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia, with over 10 inches in 24 hours in Louisville; estimated $1.0 (1.2*) billion damage/costs; 67 deaths.
1998	Hurricane Georges hits Dominican Republic and Haiti.
1998	Severe flooding in southeast Texas from two heavy rain events, with 10-20 inch rainfall totals; approximately $1.0 (1.1*) billion damage/costs; 31 deaths.
1998	Hurricane Bonnie, category 3 hurricane, strikes eastern North Carolina and Virginia; extensive agricultural damage due to winds and flooding, with 10-inch rains in two days in some locations; approximately $1.0 (1.1) billion damage/costs; three deaths.
1998	Severe drought and heat wave from Texas/Oklahoma eastward to the Carolinas; $6.0-$9.0 (6.1 - 9.1*) billion damages to agriculture and ranching; at least 200 deaths.
1998	Very damaging severe thunderstorms with large hail over wide areas of Minnesota; over $1.5 (1.6*) billion damage/costs; one death.
1998	Hurricane Mitch hits Central America, killing 10,000 people, destroying buildings, roads and bridges, and which, according to the president of Honduras, causes in two days the loss of what it has taken his country 50 years to build.
1998	Drought in Sudan.
1998	Ice storm in Canada causes $4.2 (4.3*) billion in damages.
1999	Two back-to-back hurricane-force storms leave 97 people dead in Western Europe. Winds reaching 120 mph uproot trees, disrupt transportation, and leave millions of homes without power.
1999	Two outbreaks of tornadoes in six-day period strike Arkansas and Tennessee; approximately $1.3 (1.4*) billion damage/costs and 17 deaths.
1999	Large category 2 hurricane, Floyd, makes landfall in eastern NC, causing 10-20 inch rains in two days, with severe flooding in NC and some flooding in SC, VA, MD, PA, NY, NJ, DE, RI, CT, MA, NH, and VT; estimates of at least $6.0 (6.5) billion damage/costs and 77 deaths.
1999	Supercyclone hits eastern India, leaving an estimated 15 million people homeless.
1999	Earthquake measuring a 7.6 on the Richter scale in Izmit, Turkey kills 17,000 people and leaves thousands homeless.
1999	Very dry summer and high temperatures, mainly in eastern U.S., with extensive agricultural losses; over $1.0 (1.1*) billion damage/costs; estimated 502 deaths.
1999	Outbreak of F4-F5 tornadoes hits in Oklahoma and Kansas, along with Texas and Tennessee; Oklahoma City area is hardest hit; over $1.6 (1.7*) billion damage/costs; 55 deaths.
2000	Severe fire season in western states due to drought and frequent winds, with nearly seven million acres burned; estimate of over $2.0 billion in damage/costs (includes fire suppression); no deaths reported.
2000	Severe drought and persistent heat over south-central and southeastern states causing significant losses to agriculture and related industries; estimate of over $4.0 billion in damage/costs; estimated 140 deaths nationwide.
2000	Severe drought and persistent heat over south-central and southeastern states causing significant losses to agriculture and related industries; estimate of over $4.0 billion in damage/costs; estimated 140 deaths nationwide.
2000	Major drought in the Horn and east Africa, including Ethiopia, which leaves 16 million people facing hunger and starvation.
2001	Storms, tornadoes, and hail in the states of TX, OK, KS, NE, IA, MO, IL, IN, WI, MI, OH, KY, WV, and PA, over a six-day period; over $1.9 billion in damage/costs, with the most significant losses due to hail; at least three deaths.
2001	Tropical Storm Allison produces rainfall amounts of 30-40 inches in portions of coastal Texas and Louisiana, causing severe flooding, especially in the Houston area, then moves slowly northeastward; fatalities and significant damage are reported in TX, LA, MS, FL, VA, and PA; estimate of approximately $5.0 billion in damage/costs; at least 43 deaths.
2001	On September 11 hijackers crash two commercial jets into Twin Towers of World Trade Center; two more hijacked jets are crashed into the Pentagon and a field in rural PA. Total dead number 2,992, including the 19 hijackers. Islamic al-Qaeda terrorist group is blamed.
2001	Fear of anthrax increases when five people die after inhaling its spores.
2002	Moderate to extreme drought over large portions of 30 states, including the western states, the Great Plains, and much of the eastern U.S.; estimate of over $10.0 billion in damages.
2002	Major fires over 11 western states from the Rockies to the West Coast, due to drought and periodic high winds, with over 7.1 million acres burned; over $2.0 billion in damages and 21 deaths.
2003	Total world AIDS cases is estimated at over 40 million. Total world AIDS deaths is over 20 million.

* = amount in 2007 U.S. dollars

2003	Hurricane Isabel makes landfall in eastern North Carolina, causing considerable storm surge damage along the coasts of NC, VA, and MD, with wind damage and some flooding due to 4-12 inch rains in NC, VA, MD, DE, WV, NJ, NY, and PA; estimate of approximately $5 billion in damages/costs, with at least 55 deaths.
2003	Numerous tornadoes across the Midwest, Mississippi valley, Ohio/Tennessee valleys and portions of the Southeast, with a modern record one-week total of approximately 400 tornadoes reported; over $3.4 billion in damages/costs and 51 deaths.
2003	Severe storms and large hail over the southern plains and lower Mississippi valley, with Texas hardest hit, and much of the monetary losses due to hail; over $1.6 billion in damages/costs and three deaths.
2003	Southern California wildfires. More than 743,000 acres of brush and timber are burned, over 3,700 homes are destroyed; over $2.5 billion damage/costs; 22 deaths.
2003	*Columbia* space shuttle breaks up on reentering Earth's atmosphere on its way to Kennedy Space Center, killing all seven crew members: Rick D. Husband, William C. McCool, Michael P. Anderson, David M. Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark, and the first Israeli astronaut, Ilan Ramon. Foam insulation fell from the shuttle during launch, damaging the left wing. On reentry, hot gases entered the wing, leading to the disintegration of the shuttle.
2004	Indian Ocean tsunami causes massive losses in human life and infrastructure, leaving an estimated five million people in need; 186,983 killed and billions of dollars in damage.
2004	A magnitude 9.0 quake strikes off the coast of Sumatra, triggering tsunamis that sweep through the coastal regions of a dozen countries bordering the Indian Ocean. More than 156,000 die and thousands more are missing.
2004	Hurricane Charley hits Florida, causing $15 billion in economic losses.
2004	Hurricane Frances makes landfall in east-central Florida, causing significant wind, storm surge, and flooding damage along with considerable flood damage in the states of GA, SC, NC, and NY due to 5-15 inch rains; causes $9 billion in damages.
2004	Category 3 Hurricane Ivan, makes landfall in Alabama, causing $13 billion in damages.
2004	Tropical Storm Jeanne causes severe flooding in Dominican Republic and Haiti. It destroys entire communities, displaces tens of thousands of people, and results in over 3,000 lives lost. Later, it hits east-central Florida as a hurricane.
2005	Hurricane Dennis causes a preliminary estimate of over $2 billion in damage/costs and at least 12 deaths.
2005	Hurricane Katrina slams into the U.S. Gulf Coast, destroying towns in Mississippi and Louisiana. It displaces tens of thousands of people and leaves 1,836 dead. Collapse of New Orleans' antiquated levee system shatters the city.
2005	Hurricane Wilma moves from the Caribbean to Mexico and on to South Florida, causing extensive damage estimated at over $10 billion and leaving six million without power.
2006	13 coal miners are trapped in the Sago Mine in West Virginia; 12 die and one survives. The cause of the explosion is unknown. An initial report that 12 survived turns out to be erroneous, leaving relatives and friends furious when they hear the actual account three hours later that 12 are dead – and only one survives.
2006	A train derails and plunges into the Moraca canyon in Bioce, Montenegro, killing 46 and injuring 19.
2006	A mudslide caused by the collapse of a mountain engulfs the town of Guinsaugon, Philippines, burying more than 1,000 people. Rescue workers are unable to recover many survivors. More than 3,330 are left homeless. The depth of the landslide is estimated at 13 ft, covering an area of 1.2 sq mi (3 sq km).
2007	Continued drought conditions and high winds cover much of the western U.S. (AK, AZ, CA, ID, UT, MT, NV, OR, WA), resulting in numerous wildfires; national acreage burned exceeds 8.9 million acres (mainly in the West) and over 3,000 homes and structures are destroyed in southern California alone. There are over $1 billion in damages/costs and at least 12 deaths.
2007	An 8.0 earthquake strikes Peru, killing 512 people, injuring more than 1,500, and causing tsunami warnings in the Pacific Ocean.
2008	A tornado outbreak, the deadliest in 23 years, kills 58 in the southern U.S. Damage is estimated at over $500 million.
2008	Over 69,000 are killed in central southwest China by an earthquake measuring 8.0.
2008	Hurricane Gustav makes landfall on Louisiana as a Category 2 and kills 7 in the U.S., after making landfall on western Cuba as a Category 4 and killing 66 in Haiti, 8 in the Dominican Republic, and 11 in Jamaica. A total of at least $8.3 billion in damages is reported.
2008	Hurricane Hanna causes 7 deaths and $160 million in damages within the U.S., and 529 in Haiti—mostly due to floods and mudslides.
2008	Hurricane Ike makes landfall on Texas as a Category 2 and kills 27 in the U.S., after killing 4 in Cuba, 1 in the Dominican Republic, and 75 in Haiti. A total of $31.5 billion in damages is reported.





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